

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 BANGKOK 16664

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

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SUBJ: POLITICAL PARTIES PICTURE

REF: BANGKOK 3928; BANGKOK 6856

SUMMARY:

WITH THE PROMULGATION OF THE CONSTITUTION AND THE ENACTMENT OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES LAW, THE ORGANIZATION VARIABLES OF THE POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT ARE KNOWN, PARTY ORGANIZATION IS PROGRESSING APACE, AND ORGANIZERS AND CANDIDATES ARE EMERGING. EIGHT MAJOR POLITICAL GROUPS ARE EVIDENT, INCLUDING GROUPS WHICH COMPOSED THE GOVERNMENT PARTY DURING THE 1969-71 LEGISLATURE. AS OF OCTOBER 16 THESE GROUPS CAN BEGIN REGISTERING WITH THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AS

POLITICAL PARTIES. VARIOUS SPLINTER GROUPS MAY LENGTHEN THE BALLOT, BUT WILL HAVE SLIGHT REPRESENTATION IN THE
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NEXT PARLIAMENT. IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT ANY ONE PARTY WILL

CAPTURE THE PARLIAMENT AND COALITION GOVERNMENT SEEMS INEVITABLE. THE CAMPAIGN PROMISES TO BE SPIRITED AND CERTAIN ISSUES INEVITABLY WILL ARISE. END SUMMARY.

1. POLITICAL PARTY ORGANIZERS NOW KNOW THAT, UNDER THE POLITICAL PARTIES LAW, TO REGISTER A PARTY THEY NEED 15 FOUNDING MEMBERS AND SIGNATURES FROM 1000 ORDINARY MEMBERS. PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATES MUST BE MEMBERS OF POLITICAL PARTIES AND OVER 25 YEARS OLD. THE MINIMUM AGE FOR PARTY MEMBERS IS 20 YEARS. THE CONSTITUTION REQUIRES THAT THE FUTURE PRIME MINISTER MUST BE ELECTED TO THE LOWER HOUSE. THUS, WITH THE OCTOBER 7 PROMULGATION OF THE CONSTITUTION, THE OCTOBER 16 ENACTMENT OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES LAW AND THE IMMINENT PASSAGE OF THE ELECTIONS LAW, THE ORGANIZATIONAL VARIABLES OF THE POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT ARE KNOWN. GHOSTS OF THE UNITED THAI PEOPLES' PARTY (UTPP).

2. THE CLIQUES WHICH COMPOSED THE UTPP, THE GOVERNMENT PARTY IN THE 1969-71 LEGISLATURE, HAVE SEPARATELY RECONSTITUTED THEMSELVES. GENERAL KRIT SIWARA IS AN IMPORTANT BEHIND THE SCENES SUPPORTER, IF NOT THE CHOREOGRAPHER, FOR THESE POLITICAL PARTIES. THE MILITARY IS IN AN AWKWARD POSITION OVER THE COMING ELECTIONS BECAUSE OF REPEATED PLEDGES TO ABSTAIN. THE MILITARY, HOWEVER, NEEDS PARLIAMENTARY DEFENDERS. KRIT, SINCE HE WAS ONE OF THE FOUNDERS OF THE UTPP AND DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL, PROBABLY REALIZES THAT THREE OR MORE PARTIES MIGHT RETURN MORE CANDIDATES TO PARLIAMENT THAN ONE RECONSTRUCTED URPP PARTY. IN THE LAST ELECTIONS THE UTPP ONLY WON 35 PERCENT OF THE 219 CONTESTS.

3. THE GROUPS WHICH CONTAIN A CORE OF FORMER UTPP PARLIAMENTARIANS ARE:

A) THAI NATION (CHAT THAI) PARTY. THE PARTY'S LEADING PERSONALITIES ARE MAJOR GENERAL CHATCHAI CHUNHAWAN (DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER), RETIRED MAJOR GENERALS SIRI SIRIYOTHIN (SPEAKER OF THE 1969-71 LEGISLATURE), PRAMAN ADIREKSAN (PRESIDENT, THAI INDUSTRIAL ASSOCIATION), AND LIEUTENANT GENERAL PHAITHUN INGKHATANUWAT. THIS PARTY CONTAINS THE REMNANTS OF THE PHIN CHUNHAWAN-PHAO SIYANON CLIQUE WHICH LOST OUT TO GENERAL SARIT THANARAT IN THE CONFIDENTIAL

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POWER STRUGGLES OF 1956. PHAITHUN WAS A COMMANDER OF THE THAI VOLUNTEERS IN LAOS, IS THE PRESENT CABINET'S LIAISON MAN WITH LAOTAIN AFFAIRS, AND WAS A KEY ORGANIZER FOR THE DEFUNCT UTPP.

B) SOCIAL AGRARIAN (KASET SANGKHOM) PARTY. THE PARTY'S LEADING PERSONALITIES ARE FORMER UTPP PARLIAMENTARIANS SAWAT KHAMPRAKOP (NAKHON SAWAN PRVINCE), PRASIT CHUPINIT (KAMPHENGPHET PRVINCE), SAWAENG PHIBUNSARAWUT (UDORN

PROVINCE), AND NOM UPPRAMAI (NAKHON SI THAMMARAT PROVINCE AND DEPUTY SPEAKER OF THE 1969-71 LEGISLATURE). THIS PARTY HAS THE LARGEST COLLECTION OF FORMER UTPP PARLIAMENTARIANS. IT APPEARS TO CONTAIN THOSE CIVILIAN POLITICOS WHO ATTAINED HIGH POSITIONS IN THE UTPP EVEN THOUGH MILITARY LEADERS DOMINATED THE PARTY.

C) SOCIAL JUSTICE (KHARMA SANGKHOM) PARTY. WEALTHY FORMER UTPP PARLIAMENTARIANS FROM RATBURI, THAWIT KLINPRATHUM, BEGAN ORGANIZING HIS SERI RATH (FREE NATION) PARTY SHORTLY AFTER THE OCTOBER 1973 CHANGE IN GOVERNMENT. IN MID-SEPTEMBER 1974 SERI RATH COMBINED WITH FOUR SMALLER GROUPINGS TO FORM THE DHARMA SANGKHOM PARTY. THAWIT IS A CLOSE PERSONAL AND BUSINESS FRIEND OF RETIRED AIR CHIEF MARSHAL THAWI CHUNLASAP WHO ONLY RECENTLY PUBLICLY IDENTIFIED HIMSELF WITH THE SOCIAL JUSTICE PARTY AND MAY BE ELECTED ITS LEADER. NOTABLE OTHER UTPP POLITICOS INCLUDE PRAMAN KUNLAMAT (CHUMPHON PROVINCE), SURIN THEPKANCHANA (SAMUT SAKHON PROVINCE), BUNTHOM YENMOT (SAMUT PRAKAN PROVINCE) AND LT. GEN. (RETIRED) CHAN ANG SUCHOT, ALL OF WHOM ARE PRESENTLY IN THE APPOINTED NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY, AS IS THAWIT. ANOTHER KEY PERSONALITY IS BUN CHAROENCHAI WHO MAY ALSO GET A HIGH PARTY POSITION. SOMBUN PAIRIN, DEMOCRAT PARTY CANDIDATE IN ROE ET PROVINCE IN 1968 WHO SWITCHED TO THE UTPP AFTER THE LAST ELECTION, IS WORKING ON THE PARTY'S CAMPAIGN LITERATURE. THE PARTY APPEARS TO BE MORE A MIXTURE OF UNTESTED HOPEFULS AND VETERAN POLITICIANS THAN THE OTHER UTPP CORE GROUPS.

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D) SOCIAL NATIONALIST (SANGKHOM CHATNIYOM) PARTY. THE PERSONAL VEHICLE OF PRASIT KANCHANAWAT, FORMER MINISTER OF COMMERCE, WHO LED HIS LIBERAL PARTY INTO A COALITION WITH THE RULING UTPP DURING THE LAST PARLIAMENT. PRASIT INTENDS TO RUN IN CHACHAENGSAO PROVINCE. THIS IS THE SMALLEST OF THE UTPP CORE GROUPS AND HAS A STRONG FLAVORING OF THE FORMER LIBERAL PARTY.

4. THE PRAMOT BROTHERS.

A) THE DEMOCRAT PARTY, ALWAYS THE BRIDESMAID, IS HAVING ITS LEADERSHIP PROBLEMS. WHEN FOUNDER KHUANG APHAIWONG DIED IN 1968, M.R. SENI PRAMOT ASSUMED THE LEADERSHIP REINS. SENI DOES NOT DOMINATE THE PARTY AND THIS HAS SOMETIMES LED TO PARTY DIS-AGREEMENTS LEAKING INTO THE PUBLIC DOMAIN. THE REAL INTERNAL ISSUE IS WHETHER THE AGING PARTY LEADERS WILL GIVE SOME OF THE YOUNGER MEN MORE POWER AND ENCOURAGEMENT. SOME OF THE OLDER PARTY MEMBERS THINK THAT ELECTORAL VICTORY IS AT HAND AND THAT IT IS NOT THE TIME TO BE EXPERIMENTING WITH NEW ISSUES AND FACES. THIS EVOLVES INTO BYZANTINE MANEUVERINGS BETWEEN SENI AND EX-SECRETARY GENERAL YAI SAWITCHAT (NAKHON SAWAN PROVINCE) AND INCLUDES THE ATTEMPT OF A FACTION USING THE NAME OF KHUNYING LEKHA APHAIWONG, EX-CONFIDENTIAL

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DEMOCRAT MP FROM BANGKOK AND THE WIDOW OF KHUANG, TO ALSO REGISTER AS THE DEMOCRAT PARTY. THE ARGUMENT BETWEEN THIS FACTION AND SENI'S GROUP OVER WHO HAS THE RIGHT TO USE THE NAME "DEMOCRAT" MAY HAVE TO GO TO COURT. AN OPENING IS THUS CREATED FOR THE SPOILING TACTICS OF FORMER DEMOCRATS, SUCH AS CHUMPHON MANINET, WHO HAVE BEEN THROWN OUT OF THE PARTY, TO FORCE A REENTRY THROUGH FACTIONALIST MEANS. CHUMPHON CLAIMS TO HAVE ESTABLISHED THE DEMOCRACY (PRACHATHIPATAI) PARTY. THIS LED TO THE SCENE ON OCTOBER 14 WHERE SENI AND CHUMPHON BOTH APPEARED AT THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR TO TAKE OUT REGISTRATION PAPERS. A MORE SIGNIFICANT DEFECTION FROM THE DEMOCRAT RANKS OCCURRED WHEN BUNTHENG THONGSAWAT (LAMPANG PROVINCE) MOVED OVER TO THE SOCIAL ACTION PARTY. TO COMPENSATE THE DEMOCRATS UNITED WITH THONGDI ITSARACHIWIN OF THE FREE MORALS (ITSARATHAM) PARTY IN CHIANG MAI PROVINCE. DESPITE LEADERSHIP AND FINANCIAL PROBLEMS THE DEMOCRATS SHOULD RETURN THE LARGEST NUMBER OF CANDIDATES TO THE PARLIAMENT FROM A PARTY THAT DOES NOT INCLUDE A UTPP CORE.

B) SOCIAL ACTION (KIT SANGKHOM) PARTY (SAP). THIS PARTY IS THE MOST RECENT POLITICAL VEHICLE OF M.R. KHUKRIT PRAMOT WHO

FOUNDED THE PROGRESSIVE PARTY IN 1945 WHICH LATER MERGED WITH THE DEMOCRAT PARTY UNDER KHUANG APHAIWONG. WHILE SAP MAY NOT WIN THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF SEATS, ITS STRATEGY IS TO PRESENT KHUKRIT AS A COMPROMISE PRIME MINISTER WHICH OTHER PARTIES CAN SUPPORT IN A COALITION. MUCH OF THE MONEY AND ORGANIZATION BEHIND SAP BELONGS TO BANGKOK BANK VICE PRESIDENT, BUNCHU ROTCHANASATHIAN. WHILE FEW FORMER UTPP PARLIAMENTARIANS HAVE JOINED THE SAP, IT HAS CAPTURED AN IMPORTANT PERSONALITY IN FORMER DEMOCRAT PARLIAMENTARIAN BUNTHENG THONGSAWAT (LAMPHANG PROVINCE). SINCE THERE ARE A NUMBER OF BANKERS AND INDUSTRIALISTS IN SAP, SUCH AS PHONG SARASIN THE LOCAL COCA-COLA BOTTLER, IT APPEARS TO BE A MODERATE PARTY STRESSING GOOD GOVERNMENT OVER ANY PARTICULAR SOCIAL OR ECONOMIC ISSUE. YAI SAWITCHAT (DEMOCRAT, NAKHON SAWAN) HAS DEVELOPED AN ADVISORY RELATIONSHIP WITH KHUKRIT, BUT HAS NOT YET JUMPED PARTIES.

THE WHIZ KIDS.

5. NEW FORCE (PHALANG MAI) PARTY. MOSTLY YOUNGER AND POLITICALLY INEXPERIENCED PEOPLE ARE JOINING THE PHALANG MAI.

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DR. KRASAE CHANAWONG (1973 MAGSAYSAY AWARD WINNER) WAS ELECTED TEMPORARY LEADER, BUT SEEMS UNWILLING TO HEAD THE PARTY INTO THE ELECTORAL BATTLES, THUS THERE MAY BE SOME LEADERSHIP PROBLEMS ON THE HORIZON. IF THE PARTY ACHIEVES ANY SUCCESS IT WILL PROBABLY BE IN URBAN BANGKOK OR PERHAPS THE NORTHEAST. PHALANG MAI PARTY ORGANIZERS CONSIDER THAT THEY ARE WORKING THE FUTURE, AND DO NOT EXPECT TO ACQUIRE A LARGE NUMBER OF PARLIAMENTARY SEATS. THEY APPARENTLY INTEND TO FIELD A LARGE NUMBER OF CANDIDATES BUT TARGET A FEW RACES TO PROVIDE A REAL CHOICE BETWEEN THE "POLLUTED" POLITICIAN AND THE CONCERNED CANDIDATE. COMPLICATING THEIR "NEW" IMAGE IS THE ANNOUNCED SELECTION OF THANAT KHOMAN AND MAJOR GENERAL CHANA SAMUTWANIT, FORMER AMBASSADOR TO CAMBODIA, TO RUN IN BANGKOK. FORMER INDUSTRIAL FINANCE CORPORATION OF THAILAND GENERAL MANAGER KRAISI NIMMENHEMIN WILL RUN IN HIS HOME TOWN OF CHIANG MAI FOR PHALANG MAI.

NORTHEAST SOCIALISTS.

6. TWO "SOCIALIST" GROUPINGS WILL TRY TO FARM THE DRY NORTHEAST PLATEAU. SOCIALIST (SANGKHOM NIYOM) PARTY IS ONE LABEL THAT IS BEING USED FOR THE PEOPLE IN SOMKHIT SISANGKHOM'S PREVIOUS SOCIAL DEMOCRAT PARTY. SOMKHIT HAS AVOIDED UNITING WITH OTHER SOCIALIST GROUPINGS IN HOPES OF DEVELOPING HIS OWN VIABLE ORGANIZATION. HE HAS EVEN TOYED WITH THE IDEA OF AN ALLIANCE WITH POLITICAL ACTIVIST THIRAYUT BUNMI, BUT HAS LITTLE TO SHOW FOR HIS EFFORTS. SOCIALIST UNITED FRONT (NAEO RUMSANGKHOM)

PARTY IS THE SUCCESSOR TO THE ECONOMIC UNITED FRONT.
KHLAEO NORAPHATI (KHON KAEN PROVINCE) HAS ASSUMED THE
LEADERSHIP ROLE, BUT HIS GROUP, LIKE MANY PARTIES, SUFFERS
FROM FINANCIAL ANEMIA.
OTHER POLITICAL GROUPINGS.

7. SINCE THAI POLITICAL PARTIES ARE BUILT AROUND PERSON-
ALITIES, THERE TENDS TO BE A PROLIFERATION OF SMALL
PARTIES, SOME OF WHICH MIGHT RETURN ONE OR TWO PARLIAMEN-
TARIANS, DEPENDING ON LOCAL POPULARITY. MOST OF THESE
GROUPS, HOWEVER, ARE SHOW PIECES FOR LEVERAGE WHEN THE
LEADERS WANT TO JOIN MORE VIABLE GROUPS. "THE NATION"
OCTOBER 18 REPORTED THAT 34 GROUPS HAD TAKEN OUT PAPERS TO
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REGISTER AS POLITICAL PARTIES. WHILE THE VARIETY OF PARTIES
MAY LENGTHEN THE BALLOT IN A FEW PROVINCES, FEW WILL SIT
IN THE NEXT PARLIAMENT.

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THE CAMPAIGN.

8. PERSONALITY, NOT PRINCIPLES OR PLATFORM, IS THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN THAI POLITICAL PARTY FORMATION. PERSONALITY WILL BE HIGHLY IMPORTANT IN SWAYING THE VOTERS. CERTAIN ISSUES ARE BOUND TO ASSERT THEMSELVES, HOWEVER, AND WILL PROBABLY COVER THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES: LAW AND ORDER, CORRUPTION AND GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY, STATES OF THE ECONOMY, PAROCHIAL ISSUES WHICH ETHNIC CANDIDATES MIGHT RAISE, AND FOREIGN POLICY, INCLUDING THE U.S. PRESENCE. AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE COMING CAMPAIGN WILL BE PERSONAL ATTACKS ON THE OPPONENTS. SUCH ATTACKS WILL FOCUS ON THE ISSUE OF "COLLABORATION" WITH THE PREVIOUS MILITARY GOVERNMENT, WHICH COULD PUT SOME OF THE FORMER UTPP PARLIAMENTARIANS ON THE DEFENSIVE. RECOGNITION OF THIS WEAK POINT PROBABLY RE-STRAINS KRIT AND THE OTHER MILITARY MEN WHO HAD DOMINATED THE IMPORTANT COMMITTEES OF THE UTPP FROM IDENTIFYING WITH ANY OF THE PRESENT UTPP CORE GROUPS.

9. THE COMING CAMPAIGN WILL BE MORE HARD FOUGHT THAN IN PREVIOUS TIMES, IF FOR NO OTHER REASON THAN THAT THE SMALLER ELECTORAL DISTRICTS TRULY PIT THE CANDIDATES AGAINST EACH
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OTHER AND GIVE THE LOCALLY POPULAR MAN A BETTER CHANCE AGAINST THE RICH OUTSIDER. INDICATIONS ARE THAT THERE IS HEAVY INTEREST IN THESE ELECTIONS AND A NUMBER OF PARTIES MENTIONING HAVING A CANDIDATE FOR EACH OF THE 269 CONTESTS. THE SANYA GOVERNMENT IS AWARE THAT THE CONDUCT OF THE ELECTIONS WILL BE IMPORTANT IN MAKING THE RESULTS ACCEPTABLE. LOCAL OFFICIALS, NEVERTHELESS, MAY EXPERIENCE CONSIDERABLE PRESSURE TO YIELD TO FAVORITISM.

COMMENTS:

10. SINCE THE CONSTITUTION REQUIRES THAT THE NEXT PRIME MINISTER BE AN ELECTED MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT, STRATEGY IS DIFFERENT TODAY FROM THE 1969 ELECTIONS. IF THE BEHIND THE SCENES POWER BROKERS ARE UNWILLING TO RUN FOR OFFICE, THEN THEY MUST DECIDE ON AN ACCEPTABLE PROXY. THAILAND'S NEXT PRIME MINISTER MAY THUS BE SOMETHING OF A DARK-HORSE, HONEST BUT KNOWN CHARACTER.

11. WITH SO MANY PARTIES IN THE RUNNING, IT IS UNLIKELY THAT ANY ONE PARTY WILL RECEIVE A MAJORITY OF THE SEATS IN THE NEXT PARLIAMENT. THERE IS A SLIGHT CHANCE THAT THE TOTAL NUMBER OF SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATES FROM PARTIES WITH A UTPP CORE WILL BE CLOSE TO THE COVETED MAJORITY, BUT THERE IS A POSSIBILITY THAT THE VARIOUS UTPP CLIQUES WILL BE UNABLE TO COOPERATE. UTPP CLIQUE PARLIAMENTARY

STRATEGY MAY BE TO ENTER A COALITION GOVERNMENT AND LET
A NON-UTPP PARTY FRONT. IT WAS THROUGH A SIMILAR CIR-
CUMSTANCE THAT KHUANG APHAIWONG BECAME PRIME MINISTER IN
THE IMMEDIATE POST-WORLD WAR II PERIOD.
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